



S.H.I.T. is a hardcore punk band from Toronto. They are: DeMarco (bass), Ryan (vocals), Jose (drums), Warren (guitar), and Greg (guitar). After a splendid demo back in 2012, they recently put out two 7"s, *Collective Unconsciousness* and *Generation Shit*, on *Iron Lung* and *Lengua Armada*, respectively. This interview was conducted on their recent *West Coast* tour. Interview by Jason Halal. Photos by Martin Sarrondeguy.

MRR: Alright, so what the hell is S.H.I.T.?

Greg: S.H.I.T. is a movement. We're a five-piece rock'n'roll act from Toronto, Canada.

MRR: I understand you guys have all known each other for a long time.

Greg: Much longer than the band has existed.

Ryan: That's kinda what the band means to me, it's like...

DeMarco: Friendship?

Ryan: Yeah, I mean I met all these people through music and we're still friends and now we're getting together to make something and contribute back to what brought us together.

Jose: These aren't my friends.

Greg: And now we're a roving gang of idiots.

MRR: OK, so your demo was very well received and now, two years later, you've put out these two 7"s. Why did it take so long?

Greg: A lot of reasons. These two 7"s were both recorded a year ago and they just kinda took their time to get out. We wrote and recorded them over a series of time, and then we were slow to mix it, slow to do artwork. The second one got delayed because of artwork, and so it was just this never-ending process of slowness. There was no immediacy to it.

MRR: Was there any anxiety about living up to the demo?

Greg: For me absolutely not. I still find it surprising that people like the demo. There were no personal expectations.

Ryan: Well, we started the band with the lowest expectations possible.

Greg: The band's called S.H.I.T. [laughs]

Ryan: We got together for fun pretty much.

MRR: When did it become a serious thing?

Greg: It's still not a serious thing.

MRR: Well, when did it become what it is now?

Greg: You mean how did we end up on the West Coast? Well, we just thought, "Hey can we do this and not lose a lot of money?" and that's about it. We're just doing the things that manage to be possible for us. To me, it hasn't really changed between then and now.

MRR: So talking specifically about the record, what's new and what's the same?

Ryan: The recordings haven't been heard before, but they're not that new.

Greg: We've been playing these songs for over a year-and-a-half. The recordings are new to people. I think finally there's a bit more cohesiveness to what the band is. I think there's finally a distinct visual style, but other than that...

MRR: Speaking of which, we talked a bit about art earlier and what you were shooting for. Tell us about who did it and they kinds of ideas you were working with.

Greg: I think it was a combination of a bunch of different perspectives. Personally, I think it's smart to take your influences and put your own spin on them. When I look at that record I think of Pushead and Crass. But that's separate from what influenced the artwork and Ryan is probably better to speak about that. I like the illustrative style and we did that style to stand out from a lot of what everyone else is doing.

Ryan: I think the original intention was to collaborate with Jaybo just based on the music and the lyrics. The hope was to have him interpret the music and lyrics because we really like the work he's done before and he's a friend of ours. We also chose him because his work is distinct and it's not typical of a lot of punk stuff.

MRR: Did you give him a lot of visual cues?

Ryan: On the second record we did. With the first he was more in control of what he wanted to play with. We gave him the lyrics and the tracks and discussed the subject matter with him. So the first was more of a collaboration, we had more discussions and used his ideas to build a picture.

MRR: Are you happy with the way it turned out?

Ryan: Yeah, absolutely. It looks amazing.

Greg: And on the inside of the second record, the artworks is done by Matt Belosi from Philly. And that was just another idea related

to one of the songs on the record. We originally did it for a shirt and then realized that would be a cool poster.

MRR: That gets to another thing we discussed the other day, Greg. The idea of being part of a hardcore continuum, a tradition, but at the same time either trying to break some new ground or explore some territory that isn't totally predictable or already been done to death. Tell us about that.

Greg: Well I think this comes from the idea that punk is probably more prone to be repetitive than anything else. To me at least, punk was never supposed to be something you could just dress up for and then when you're done with it, just piss off. It was supposed to be more than fashion, more than music, it was supposed to be a way of life. And a lot of times as you get older you learn that's not the case for a lot of people who come through it. It is a lot of dressing up. It's a lot of appropriating something as opposed to doing something. We are a hardcore punk band, we are indebted to the history of punk, but I'm not necessarily interested in what the word punk embodies in 2014 in terms of Fat Wreck Chords or Warped Tour or any of what that more mainstream punk represents. Even the micro-cliques in punk just seem to be a rehash of something. I'm far more interested in community and politics and I think that part of being a hardcore punk band is being representative of what punk was at its roots, that being a community of individuals looking to create something that actually works together to confront the status quo. It shouldn't be about the tropes that have been carried on for the last however many years.

MRR: OK, so I wanna talk about Toronto. Tell me about the state of punk and DIY music in your hometown.

Jose: Could be worse.

DeMarco: I think it's in a cool state, and I feel like there are younger bands coming out, but none of the kids our age are still doing stuff. And maybe I just don't hear it... I mean, there's FARANG, they're doing stuff, but I feel like a lot of those guys have just faded away.

Greg: There're a lot of young kids and they're all doing stuff to the point where, if I did a show and neglected to put a younger band on the show, none of those kids would come. They're becoming the life's blood of the scene in terms of attendance and supporting the scene. There are mainstays like FARANG, COLUMN OF HEAVEN, SEVERE, but the crowd is younger and newer these days.

MRR: So let's talk about the venue then. Greg, you've been doing the majority of shows in town for a few years now and you just opened a venue. Talk about it and what you're trying to do with it.

Greg: I guess the goal is... well, as Andy from Column of Heaven once said to me, punk music is about taking space. If this is something that is not the societal norm, the first thing you need to do is to find a space for it to grow. I always found that when I was booking shows elsewhere that, while there are venues that are hospitable to punk and hardcore in Toronto, there hasn't been a consistent DIY venue for any more than a year and a half. And I was always looking for a space. I stumbled across a space on Craigslist and went by and saw it and it's literally a cinderblock basement and it sorta became this harebrained scheme. So Warren and I chased the guy for like six weeks to get a lease and he finally gave it to us. The landlord is super cool, he's a young guy into Burning Man, into partying, just super chill. He's cool about us tagging up the place because he knows he can't really rent it to anyone. He's even told me about knowing people who intended to come to a show. So it's basically a basement we're using for shows. And so most shows I do go there. I basically book it and deal with the money side of things and make sure we're not losing a ton of money, but there's a whole crew of us making this thing work, be it bar tending, watching out for cops out front, cleaning the place, crushing empties, doing sound. There's a ton of people that have been cycling through and helping out.



MRR: All of you guys help out there, right?'

Greg: Yeah, Bobo's got a tiki bar there called Bobo's Reprise. Our friend Andy Weaver has kinda taken the de facto role of super, making sure things get done. For example, he had an ulcer or something the other day and said, "I can't do it, I can't go by there, I can't bend over" and then four hours later I got a message saying, "Yeah I cleaned up the whole place." [Laughs] And Sarde's helped bartend a bunch and helps me with the books.

MRR: Who are some of the bands that have played there?

Greg: DAWN OF HUMANS, HANK WOOD, DESTRUCTION UNIT, BREAKOUT, INSTITUTE, CRIMINAL CODE, NIGHT BIRDS, the WANKYS, ASPECTS

OF WAR, KONTRAVOID, PHARMAKON...

MRR: Is S.H.I.B.G.B.'s the official house band?

Greg: We've only played there once before.

MRR: Well, let's remind people, the name of the venue is...

Greg: S.H.I.B.G.B.'s

MRR: There are some alternative acronyms too, right?

Greg: S.H.I.B.G.B.'s and O.M.G.F.U. because that's what people say when they hear it's called S.H.I.B.G.B.'s, "Oh my god. Fuck you." That's

I think that part of being a hardcore punk band is being representative of what punk was at its roots, that being a community of individuals looking to create something that actually works together to confront the status quo.

the gag. It's just like the band name; it's a pretentiousness detector. It's like people who go, "Oh that band's called S.H.I.T.?" or "Oh, that venue's called S.H.I.B.G.B.'s?" Anybody who has that reaction to the band, we don't want them around anyway. They probably have an awful attitude.

MRR: What's been difficult about the place?

Greg: Everything.

Jose: Dealing with Greg is probably most difficult. [Laughs]

MRR: Drunk little kids?

Greg: Yeah, it's sort of this place with no rules other than be yourself.

Warren: Isn't Burning Man?

Ryan: Trying to keep it going while keeping it on the down low as well.

Greg: Yeah, I'm prone to stress and I freak out every time the cops drive by.

MRR: Have the cops visited?

Greg: They have not been inside; they haven't stopped or gotten out of the car either.

MRR: Do you let people outside?

Greg: We try to keep it to a minimum but it's hard to do. We don't have a strict no re-entry policy. Kids in Toronto expect a lot of freedoms and complain when they're not given them. So I think it'll last as long as it lasts and maybe it'll be something more or maybe it'll end next month. The whole idea is it's there now and it will be there until it's not.

MRR: OK, so getting back to the band, you guys have done some one-off things like

S.H.I.T.M.A.S.. Tell us about that.

Ryan: Well we threw a show between Christmas and New Years, it was a pretty stacked gig and we wanted to make it a celebration so we had all this special stuff. We tried to make this over the top, sensational event. We gave away free things we made stupid merch...

Greg: We had a bunch of band money sitting in a closet basically. I don't remember where the idea came up with but we just spent all this money printing shirts and making a zine and pins and—what else was there?

Ryan: The S.H.I.T. guy photo booth.

DeMarco: The Feast of Shame.

MRR: What's that?

Ryan: It was all this really gross food bought from the dollar store, like Vienna sausages and canned fish, it was pretty disgusting.

Greg: I think it's hilarious for a band to have a holiday.

Ryan: It's a celebration.

Greg: A gathering of a community.

MRR: Festivus for the rest of us.

Warren: Gathering of the Juggalos.

Greg: I was shocked at how many people came out. It was like the night before New Year's Eve and we had about 200 people come. I think a lot of people didn't know



about the free stuff because it was in this back room.

DeMarco: Also, a lot of people didn't come out for New Year. I didn't see a lot of people out the next night.

Ryan: We ruined New Year.

Greg: But there will be a S.H.I.T.M.A.S. this year. If S.H.I.B.G.B.s still exists in December it will be there. We've played bar shows, we're not opposed to it, but I think it's important that S.H.I.T.M.A.S. happens in an alternative space. But how cool would that be if S.H.I.T. has its own holiday at its own space?

MRR: OK, we're almost done here. Do you guys think that the stuff you're doing here—as friends who are also a little bit older than the new generation of kids we've been talking about—is this an attempt to build something for future generations? Because it does seem inherently optimistic.

DeMarco: I hope so.

Greg: Yeah, the whole point of this is to keep it going. It's not ours. The music is not inherently optimistic whatsoever, but the whole idea of the band's existence needs to be born of some optimism. Building a community is about spreading that optimism as much as it is about the literal message of the music. It's more than music, it's a way of life! [Laughs]

MRR: So what's next?

Greg: We had a band meeting. It was the week after S.H.I.T.M.A.S. We went out to a cheap Italian restaurant. Everyone gets really excited when the band can afford to pay for a meal. And we talked about what we're gonna do for the next year. We said, "Let's write a LP" and everyone was like, "Yeah let's do it!" And we haven't practiced since! [Big laughs] So the plan, I dunno... Maybe you'll see a dance remix, a DJ 12". We want to do a record and go to



Europe. We're playing London in the fall, and I think we want to actually do a proper tour but we want to have something more than what we have now to go do that.

MRR: Last question. This is because I know that Montreal and Toronto have a very friendly and sometimes jovially contentious rivalry. I know about the Shitty Hipsters in Toronto acronym (thanks, Spoiler). So this is your chance, let's have at it.

Greg: About Montreal?

Ryan: We love Montreal.

Greg: If I can slag the city and not the people I'm friends with...

MRR: Come on, just do it.

Greg: Montreal to me suffers from what a lot of other big cities suffer from. There're so many punks that the scene just schisms. So while there are significantly more punks in Montreal, and less in Toronto or Ottawa, it seems like those cities will always have a bigger show because everyone works together a little bit more. It's easy in Montreal to say, "this is our venue, this is our space, you're not welcome here," or "I'm not going 'cause it's at that venue," whereas in Toronto we're always struggling through something, like no real venue options, and everyone has to depend on each other.

Ryan: I don't think that's what Jason was looking for.

Greg: I don't have anything bad to say about Montreal!

DeMarco: Well, fuck the Canadiens.

All: Yeah!

MRR: Alright, well done, boys. Over and out.

